

## CHRISTMAS TREE COLLECTION

### Recommendation

That the March 14, 2025, City Operations report CO02913, be received for information.

<b>Requested Action</b>	Information only		
<b>ConnectEdmonton's Guiding Principle</b>	<b>ConnectEdmonton Strategic Goals</b>		
<b>CONNECTED</b> This unifies our work to achieve our strategic goals.	<b>Climate Resilience</b>		
<b>City Plan Values</b>	LIVE. PRESERVE.		
<b>City Plan Big City Move(s)</b>	Greener as we grow	<b>Relationship to Council's Strategic Priorities</b>	Climate adaptation and energy transition  Conditions for service success
<b>Corporate Business Plan</b>	Serving Edmontonians		
<b>Council Policy, Program or Project Relationships</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 25-year Waste Strategy</li> <li>• Bylaw 20363 - Waste Services Bylaw</li> <li>• City Policy C558C - Waste Services Fiscal Policy</li> </ul>		
<b>Related Council Discussions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• February 21, 2024, Office of the City Manager report OCM02233, Operating Budget Amendment 12 Update - Update on progress and reallocation options in advance of Spring 2024 Supplemental Operating Budget Adjustment</li> </ul>		

### Executive Summary

- The City has picked up natural Christmas trees at curbside since 1990. Fewer Christmas trees are collected by Waste Services each year, despite Edmonton's growing population.
- Christmas tree collection is done separately from regular curbside collection, adding overtime labour and fuel costs as collectors drive routes and pick up trees.

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- Christmas trees can also be dropped off at Community Recycling Depots and Eco Stations. For Edmontonians without curbside collection, all trees must be dropped off at depots.
- Transitioning services from curbside Christmas tree collection and moving to a drop-off model is a more equitable and efficient use of City resources, aligned with continuous improvement principles.
- This service change will start being communicated in early Q4 2025, reminding Edmontonians to plan for their Christmas tree disposal before they purchase trees.

## REPORT

Waste Services provides comprehensive residential waste collection services to Edmontonians, including curbside collection, apartment and condo collection, as well as waste drop-off services at Eco Stations, Community Recycling Depots and the Edmonton Waste Management Centre (EWMC). Additional seasonal services are provided, including yard waste collection, Big Bin Events and Christmas tree collection. However, the review of Christmas tree collection shows shifting consumer behaviours and low use of the service, supporting Administration's decision to transition from yearly curbside Christmas tree collection to a drop-off model for all Edmontonians.

Curbside Christmas tree collection was first introduced in 1990. Residents with curbside collection set out their natural Christmas trees<sup>1</sup> for pick-up between late January and mid-February. Christmas tree collection is an additional service provided and budgeted as an overtime cost, and is completed independently from regular curbside collection.

Alternatively, all Edmontonians can also take Christmas trees to one of the City's 19 Community Recycling Depots, four Eco Stations or the EWMC as early as December 27 each year. Currently, Edmontonians living in apartments and condos must take their Christmas trees to a depot, as they do not receive curbside collection. All Christmas trees received by the City are transported to the EWMC for processing and composting.

Over the past 10 years, fewer Christmas trees have been set out for curbside collection each year. Waste Services picked up 6,408 trees in 2025, an approximate 51 per cent decrease from 2015. An average of 7,000 homes consistently set out trees for collection from 2021 to 2024. Only 2.4 per cent of homes set out Christmas trees for collection in 2025, a decrease from approximately 5.7 per cent of homes in 2015<sup>2</sup>. Lastly, additional resources are dedicated to Christmas tree collection, including labour costs and fuel.

Transitioning to a depot drop off model for Christmas tree disposal will improve the efficiency of curbside collection while saving costs and making both curbside and apartment and condo collection services more equitable. A high-level jurisdictional scan by Administration of similar

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<sup>1</sup> Trees must be free of ornaments, garlands, nails, screws and tree stands. Large trees must be cut into lengths shorter than two metres.

<sup>2</sup> 2015 calculation: 13,060 trees divided by 228,704 single-unit homes with curbside collection service

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and regional Canadian municipalities showed that they all use a depot drop-off model as of 2025, with approximately half also having curbside collection<sup>3</sup>.

The transition to a drop off only model for Christmas tree disposal will take effect in January 2026. A communications plan will be developed prior to the 2025-2026 holiday season for residents and Christmas tree providers through the City's website, WasteWise, 311 and social media.

Edmontonians can continue dropping off trees at their nearest depot. They can also cut the tree into small pieces (maximum 2.5 cm width) and put it in the food scraps cart for regular curbside collection, or break down the trees for home mulching and composting.

### Budget/Financial Implications

Christmas tree collection is funded through both curbside and apartment and condo waste utility rates. The estimated annual cost savings of transitioning to Christmas tree drop-off only is approximately \$120,000 and will be reinvested back into waste operations, helping to keep rates stable while maintaining the quality of core waste services.

### Community Insight

No direct public engagement has been prepared on Christmas tree collection service and Administration based this decision on waste collection data. Administration will use any feedback from this decision to inform the communication plan, monitor incoming questions and comments to 311 and the Waste Customer Support Team. Administration will also conduct a review of the first year without curbside Christmas tree collection service for continuous improvement opportunities.

A September 2024 survey assessing satisfaction with City services<sup>4</sup> identified respondents perceive waste collection as a very or somewhat important civic service (92 per cent), are very or somewhat satisfied with their collection service (67 per cent) and believe the current investments in waste collection should remain the same (69 per cent).

### GBA+

Christmas trees can be large and difficult to move for Edmontonians with mobility needs and a depot drop-off model requires a large enough vehicle to transport a tree. However, Administration also infers that Edmontonians setting out a natural tree for curbside collection were able to make the logistical arrangements to transport it to their home. To support Edmontonians through this service change, a thorough communication plan will be launched before the 2025/2026 holiday season, with a focus on outlining the range of options for Christmas tree disposal.

Residents with Assisted Waste Collection will still have Christmas trees picked up at curbside. An Assisted Waste collector currently loads the tree into their vehicle and drops it off at the nearest depot as part of their regular service.

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<sup>3</sup> Curbside collection and drop-off: Fort Saskatchewan, Hamilton, Markham, Ottawa, Sherwood Park, St. Albert, Toronto, Vancouver; drop-off only: Calgary, Saskatoon, Regina, Victoria, Winnipeg

<sup>4</sup> [City of Edmonton Service Satisfaction - Online Survey](#). Advanis. September 2024.

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### Environment and Climate Review

Ending yearly curbside Christmas tree collection will reduce fuel consumption and decrease corporate GHG emissions from the City's fleet of collection trucks, as they will no longer drive routes specifically for Christmas trees. Residents have multiple options to dispose of their natural Christmas trees, with varying impacts on GHG emissions produced by Edmontonians:

1. Drop off trees or larger branches/stumps at a City recycling depot or Eco Station.
2. Cut trees into small pieces (maximum 2.5 cm in diameter) and put them in the food scraps cart for regular curbside collection.
3. Break down trees at home, using needles, twigs/branches and wood as mulch or compost material.